

Deals on wheels

Upgrading your bike has never been easier, thanks to new bike auction website Going Going Bike, launched by Andrew Nethercot and James Johnson

Andrew: The inspiration for the website is based on my cycling experience. I started cycling after university. I borrowed my dad's old shopper and did a few triathlons and sportives but I was really slow – as you'd expect – so I borrowed a friend's road bike. I was terrible at swimming and running but I enjoyed cycling so I tended to race in relay triathlons: you still get the buzz of the sport. I love triathlon transitions, they're so fantastically chaotic. I always found triathletes more approachable than cyclists. People are very friendly, maybe because it's still quite a new sport. Even the forums on triathlon websites are brilliantly welcoming.

Bike upgrades are all part of the fun of triathlon so James and I wanted to create a dedicated marketplace for people to buy and sell bikes. Before we launched the website, we commissioned some research about cycling habits in the UK. We suspected there were quite a few unused bikes kicking around UK homes, but we were shocked when the research revealed that there are around 13 million bikes gathering dust in people's sheds. We wanted to encourage people to clean up all the bikes that are sitting idle and give them a new lease of life by recycling them through GoingGoingBike.com.

When we launched the website in July 2010, we included a triathlon/time-trial category. There are 18 categories of bike on the site, including road, cyclo-cross, recumbent, mountain and BMX. You can buy or sell bikes as an individual, although we also have quite a few retailers listing bikes on the site. It gives people an alternative to websites such as ebay, but it's also a great way to find out more about bikes in general. We hope that as the website expands, retailers will become less and less important as private bike sellers find out about the site and start to list their bikes.

It's too early to draw any conclusions about people's buying and selling habits. There's so much kit involved in a triathlon so I can see us catering to people new to the sport who may want to buy some reasonably priced secondhand kit, but equally I can see people using the website who have been in the sport for a while and are looking to upgrade their bike. Some people don't have room to



James Johnson and Andrew Nethercot

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store three or four bikes in the house. We'll be selling other kit, too, including wetsuits.

To draw attention to the problem of stolen bikes, we went around London wrapping up abandoned bikes with police crime-scene tape. We spoke to the London Cycling Campaign – whose Beat The Thief campaign drew attention to the issue of bike stealing – and they told us that one of the best ways to dissuade thieves is to insist frame numbers are included in listings. We encourage our sellers to include this when they offer a bike for sale. We've also been encouraging people to register their bikes with a bike register.

There are three or four national registers – some are free and others you have to pay for to check if the bike is stolen. To avoid stolen bikes being sold on the website, we have a Prove It! campaign in association with the bikerevolution.org.

We take five per cent of sales – which is less than ebay takes. One of the problems with ebay is that some of the listings can be quite vague, so we tried to avoid this. The website allows sellers to include loads of info and photos about the condition, as well as the usual stuff about the price and length of time that you want the auction to last. We're trying to let people know about the website through social media like Twitter. Cyclists and triathletes are evangelical – they're like Mac users. They know what they like and they stick with it. Visit GoingGoingBike.com.